

COINS

Dirty work at a coin show: Thieves clean up in a rarity robbery

By Roger Boye

Several dealers were "cleaned out" of rare coins during a show in Montgomery, Ala., but not by eager collectors on a buying spree.

Two thieves looted the show's sales area in the Montgomery Civic Center shortly after midnight March 7, escaping with as much as \$10 million in rarities. They had bound and gagged the one [and only] person who was hired to guard the coins overnight during the two-day show.

Most of the 32 dealers got all of their keepsakes back four days later after police arrested five persons in connection with the incident. But in the wake of the biggest coin show robbery in U.S. history, several dealers quoted in hobby newspapers are requesting better security at

coin shows throughout the country.

"Shows are the heart of the coin business, but I'll have to be more choosy and more careful," a Georgia dealer-victim told Numismatic News.

- The hobby newspaper Numismatic News doesn't often compliment Uncle Sam for his work relating to coin collectors. But the editors praised the U.S. Mint for withholding publicity on the suspension of Kennedy half-dollar production while 1982 proof sets were on sale in February and March.

"We've had too much of that sort of thing in the past, and in each instance the hobby has ended up the loser," said the editorial, presumably referring to sales of 1981 proof and uncirculated coin sets that were hyped by news of the Susan B. Anthony dollar demise.

- If your friends who collect coins become

boastful in a few days, be forgiving. Collectors often brag about the world's greatest pastime during National Coin Week, which starts next Sunday. They hope to attract others to a fascinating—and sometimes profitable—avocation.

- Nearly 100 coin dealers will be selling their wares next weekend at the eighth annual show of the National Numismatic Network Ltd. Hours are 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. next Sunday at the Sheraton O'Hare Hotel, 6810 N. Mannheim Rd., Rosemont.

Admission is free to the show and to a companion rare coin auction starting at 7 p.m. Saturday. The Chicago company Numisco Inc. will conduct the auction.

- In still another sign of the weak coin market, an exceedingly rare 1804 silver dollar traded

hands recently at a price "in excess of \$190,000," according to reports in Coin World and elsewhere.

That's a lot of money, of course. But the same silver dollar—one of 15 known—sold for \$400,000 at an auction during the 1980 coin market boom.

The 1804 silver dollar is steeped in hobby lore, partly because none of the 15 coins was produced in 1804. Experts believe the government made eight of the dollars in 1834 or 1835 for presentation in proof sets and seven more in 1859 for sale to collectors.

Meanwhile, several dealers report that Franklin half-dollars minted between 1948 and 1963 in "choice, uncirculated condition" or better have become popular collectibles in recent weeks. Coins most in demand are dubbed "full bell lines" because they have a sharply struck Liberty Bell on the tails side.